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SECURITY INFORMATION

REPORT

COUNTRY East Germany

DATE DISTR. 30 Sept 53

SUBJECT Reaction of Soviet Troops in Germany to
Military Life

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1. The following were the principal anxieties and irritations evident among the men

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- a. The extreme confinement under which they were kept and the denial to them of female companionship and the opportunity to drink alcoholic beverages.
- b. Concern about their families at home. From some letters which passed the censor and from newly arrived recruits, they obtained a gloomy picture about life at home. They, therefore, wondered whether conditions were truly so bad or whether life in the USSR were becoming somewhat better as they were told by the political officer.
- c. Economic conditions at home, which, if really bad, as many of them thought, would hinder opportunities for decent employment upon their demobilization and return home.
- d. Worry as to whether they would survive the coming war (most of them thought war inevitable).

2. The only kind of "mental conditioning" program presented to the troops was that of the political officer (Zampolit), who, along with his programs, was thoroughly detested by practically all the troops. The talks and programs presented by the political officer were political in tenor, including such themes as the peaceful aims of Soviet policy, the warlike intentions of the Western powers, the increasingly better living conditions in the Soviet Union, the steadily

ARMY review completed.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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SECURITY INFORMATION

SECRET
-2-

25X1

worsening living conditions in the West, plus eulogies on the achievements of the Soviet Army. When asked by the military why they were confined, the Zampolit responded that the Soviet Government desired to preserve troops from false Western propaganda, as well as prevent contact with Western spies, who would try to extract military information from troops. Instead of increasing the morale of the troops, these talks, for many, had almost the opposite effect. The political officer's reiteration of the West's preparations for war preyed upon the minds of the soldiers; talk of better living conditions at home, when compared with reports from other sources, created confusion and anxiety. Without a doubt, these political indoctrination courses were a great and constant source of annoyance to the soldiers, who were impatient to have them come to an end.

3. The political officer functioned similarly to chaplains in the US Army; any soldier was free to come to him with his problems. However, the political officer did little else than make a show of trying to help.

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4. If psychiatric examinations were ever given to inductees never men. consideration given such findings in placing the

several suicides

Soviet Army in Germany

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